

Ctg police asked to arrest top criminals

BSS, Ctg

Chittagong police have been asked to nab nine "top criminals" for their involvement in killing, abduction and extortion in the port city.

They all are fugitives, police said. The nine listed criminals are: BDR Selim, who was accused in nine cases, Nasir alias Gittu Nasir, accused in three arms and murder cases, Habib Khan, accused in two murder cases, Sunil Dey, accused in 10 cases, Chandan Biswas, accused in nine cases, Abdul Quddus alias Kana Quddus, accused in seven cases, Mofizur Rahman Dulu, accused in seven cases, Shafiqul Islam Shafi, accused in 12 cases and Fazal Haque, accused in 18 cases.

Police sources said two more listed top criminals, Morshed Khan and Iqbal, were granted bail recently.

Commerce Minister Amir Khosru Mahmud Chowdhury, who is also

minister in-charge of Chittagong district, told BSS that police had been asked to prepare a new list of criminals and arrest the listed criminals without considering their party affiliations.

He said the decision was taken at review meetings of the district law and order committee of Chittagong on July 31 and August 1.

Khosru said steps were under-way to monitor police activities and none would be spared for any negligence to duty. He said police had been given a clear direction to arrest the criminals in 12 thanas of Chittagong city ignoring request or pressure from any quarter.

About the "criminals" who have been bailed out, the commerce minister said their activities and cases were being reviewed.

Chittagong Police Commissioner Shahidullah Khan said all out efforts were being made to apprehend the absconding criminals.

Save 17 pc of Bangladesh by planting trees

Minister urges students

BSS, Dhaka

Environment and Forest Minister Shajahan Siraj yesterday said 17 per cent of the country might be submerged in the sea, if 20 per cent of the total territory could not be covered with trees by 2015.

Inaugurating a tree plantation programme on Jahangirnagar University campus at Savar, he called upon students to take part in the national tree plantation movement to save the country from natural disasters.

To cover 20 per cent area of the country with trees by 2015 is a huge job and it is not possible to achieve the goal only through the government efforts, Shajahan Siraj said and urged the students to share the responsibility of that task.

Referring to the adverse effects of Farakka Barrage, he said there was a possibility that the northern region of Bangladesh would turn into a desert and the southern region might go under salty water, if the Farakka problem cannot be solved.

The minister said the government's policies on environment were benefiting indigenous industry and the common people.

The ban on polythene shopping

Youth to die for splashing acid on girl

UNB, Pirojpur

A court here yesterday convicted a young man to death for throwing acid on a girl.

The convict was identified as Ibrahim Box, 20.

According to the prosecution, Ibrahim splashed acid on his sister-in-law Lulu Mansura, 16, daughter of Tofazzal Hossain of Matibhanga village in Bhandaria upazila, when she came out of her house on March 5, 2001.

Hearing Mansura screaming, her parents rushed to the spot to see Ibrahim flee. Police arrested Ibrahim when a case was filed in this connection.

Maid drugs employer

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scious. Haq told newsmen that they suspected that the domestic help, who was appointed just the day before, served mashed potato at dinner which she might have intoxicated.

She also left the door of the flat at the Priyanka Apartment latched from outside.

Neighbours became suspicious when they saw the door latched and could hear no sounds in the flat. They unfastened the latch and found them lying unconscious.

Haq, the owner of Marvellous Construction Limited, said the miscreants took away Tk. 1.5 lakh and gold ornaments worth Tk 8.5 lakh.

The duty officer of the Ramna Police Station said last night that

they are yet to receive a complaint in this regard.

On Sunday, a tenant couple took away cash, gold ornaments and other valuables from a residence at Pallabi by serving their guests who happened to be the landlady and her daughters intoxicated drink. The couple, Soheli and Sweetie (full names could not be known), rented a room only two months ago. They invited the family to dinner on their marriage day. When they fell unconscious, the couple went to their residence and took away cash, gold ornaments and other valuables.

The victims are Shobnom alias Shabana, 13, her sisters Sabina, 16, and Shahnaz, 18, and their mother Nazma Begum, 45. They were admitted to the DMCH.

80 more down

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ples as positives. Fifteen dengue patients were admitted to the Dhaka Medical College Hospital, 12 to the Red Crescent Holy Family Hospital and five to the Al-Raji Hospital yesterday.

Three patients were admitted to the Ayesha Memorial Hospital, four to the Central Hospital and six children to the Dhaka Shishu Hospital.

The Rashmono and Samarita hospitals have 11 new dengue patients and the Monowara General Hospital has three more.

The Nibedita Children Hospital and the Mirpur Children Hospital have 15 children with dengue and the Uttara Clinic has four new dengue patients.

Fourteen new dengue patients were admitted to the Suhrawardi General Hospital and six more to the New Al-Raji Hospital.

Meanwhile, the Red Crescent Blood Collection Centre in Mohammadpur requisitioned 40

More Indian wheat

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focus on the alleged irregularities in wheat procurement."

In Sathkira, the expert committee has come up with its finding that a huge quantity of imported wheat was procured in the district during the March 15 - July 31 procurement drive.

The committee formed by the RC of food, Khulna, comprised a chemist, Rafiqul Islam, and two food inspectors - Syed Abdus Salam and Idris Ali.

After visiting Sathkira Local Supply Depot (LSD), the team said 'date- expired' Indian wheat meant for use as poultry feed was found at an abandoned government granary in the district.

It is alleged that an influential businessman and his accomplices belonging to the ruling party forced the food officials to purchase imported wheat.

As against the procurement target of 2200 metric tons (MT) of wheat in Sathkira Sadar, the local food officials were compelled to procure 808 MT of imported wheat during the last 10 days of the 135-day procurement drive.

In Pabna, Deputy Commissioner Ashrafuol Mokbul said that following allegations of poor-quality wheat purchase, made by district BNP

General Secretary Habibur Rahman Tota, one of the 37 godowns was sealed on July 13.

But surprisingly, the same godown was again opened just two days later and more imported wheat was allegedly stored there.

However, the DC defended this saying that as rice was also stocked in that godown, the authorities had to open it again for loading and unloading of rice consignments.

In Pabna, local people questioned the rationale of declaring a fresh target of additional 31,000 MT of wheat at the flag end of the procurement drive. While it was possible to procure roughly 20,000 MT out of a targeted 27,000 MT in the district in the first three months, there was no reason why the regional controller (RC) of food, Rajshahi, declared the fresh procurement target of additional 31,000 MT of wheat in the last one month, people pointed out.

The RC of food, Fakhru Islam, defended his position saying, "I declared the fresh additional target as per the government instruction. I can't be responsible for quality of the wheat purchased."

Traditional wheat growers and grain traders in Pabna suspected involvement of a section of leaders of the BNP, JCD and Jamaat in the

wheat scam.

One of those leaders, President of Ishwardi Upazila unit of BNP Mokhlesur Rahman said he was not at all involved in the scam. Rather, he blamed district BNP Organising Secretary Qamrul Islam Mintu, district JCD Convenor Mahmuddunnabi Swapan and his brother Sujan for this.

Swapan, however, denied the allegation against him. BNP leader Habibur Rahman Tota, who also was blamed by many, told this correspondent, "Had I been involved in the scandal, I would not have brought the issue to the notice of the DC."

Meanwhile, Shamsur Rahman Sharif, Awam League lawmaker from Ishwardi-Atgharia (Pabna-4) constituency, yesterday demanded a judicial inquiry into the wheat scam.

He alleged that two days after the expiry of the wheat procurement deadline, he had seen wheat being unloaded from more than 200 trucks at Muladuli CSD on August 2.

"Though I am an advisor to both the district (Pabna) and upazila (Ishwardi) wheat procurement committees, I was not informed anything about this year's wheat procurement drive," the opposition legislator said.

More M-16 rifles out there

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spective buyer. They had negotiations with a criminal in Mirpur, but the deal fell through when he quoted only Tk 3 lakh against an asking price of Tk5.5 lakh.

Later, they were in talks with a Mohammadpur ward commissioner who quoted as high as Tk 4.5 lakh. But before the deal went through, the criminals got caught.

The weapon was in three pieces and the police, unacquainted with the modern firearm, were at a loss about how to assemble it. Later, they took help from the army to put the parts together.

Shufal, a small-time criminal, was arrested last year after police were tipped off that the car he was driving was carrying weapons.

However, the information proved wrong and Shufal was released on bail.

Meantime, underworld sources said the criminals used to buy weapons from the Trading Corporation of Bangladesh (TCB) through valid licences. They used to report their weapons 'stolen' at the police stations and buy a fresh one from the TCB.

But after the government recently confiscated some 'suspicious' licences, the underworld has become fully dependent on arms smuggled across the border.

According to police sources, a number of criminals and their mid-dlemen are now in Chittagong to procure modern weapons.

The Chittagong arms bazaar has

now about a dozen M-16s procured from rebel groups in Myanmar and Thailand. The US-made weapon is considered a rare commodity in the port city, which is mainly a bazaar for AK-47s and Ak-56s. And so, confiscation of the M-16 in Dhaka has startled the Chittagong police, who are now trying to keep a tab on prospective buyers.

Nazrul of Cox's Bazar, Kashem of Fatikhchhari, Archimedes Chakma and Anil Chakma of the Hill Tracts and Shamsul Alam Master of Potia, who are the top gun dealers, are now under police watch.

According to underworld sources, Dhaka criminals now possess modern weapons like AK-47, AK-56, Uzi and Pietro Beretta assault rifles.

Policemen led raid

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Begum Shamsun Nahar, a house tutor of the hall who testified before the commission yesterday, also admitted that policemen entered.

Security guards Wazillullah, Sultan Mahmud, Jalal Hossain Gazal and Ripon Chandra Dey went to the makeshift office of the probe body at the National Academy for Education Management (NAEM) Bhaban in the city yesterday to file a joint statement regarding the events at the hall on the day. They were on-duty at the hall from 10:00pm on July 23 to 6:00am on July 24.

In the statement, they said policemen started clubbing the students indiscriminately at about 3:00am and they heard students scream inside the hall. They also said policemen dragged and pulled them to the police van.

When asked, one of the guards said he saw about 100 police personnel, both men and women, at the gate of the hall. "At one stage, police broke open the gate and entered the hall."

Requesting anonymity, he said he saw policemen drag the students holding their clothes and taking them towards the police van.

Deputy Commissioner (North) of the Dhaka Metropolitan Police Akbar Ali in his statement said, "We

sent police to the hall as per a directive of the hall provost and university proctor. But we did not know what actually happened at the hall after that."

Taking to the press, he said the matter is now under investigation and the probe will reveal the truth.

Meanwhile, former officer in charge of the Ramna Police Station Lutfar Rahman has come up with contradictory statements before the one-member commission formed to investigate the alleged police brutality on the female students of the hall and their arrest. On Monday, he refuted the charges that policemen entered in the hall only to admit after a couple of days that male members of the police did go inside the female hall.

The commission headed by sitting justice M Tafazzal Islam recorded statements of six policemen yesterday. They are Deputy Commissioner (North) Akbar Ali, Additional Deputy Commissioner (ADC) Zahirul Haq and Additional Deputy Commissioner Abdur Rahim, Officer in Charge of the Hazaribagh Police Station Shamsuddin Saleh Ahmed, Sergeant of the Nikhet Police Check Post Anwar Hossain and Petrol Inspector Hamidur Rahman.

ADC Abdur Rahim, who testified for about one hour from 2:30pm,

refused to talk to journalists while leaving the makeshift commission office at about 4:30pm.

General students and even the JCD leaders who had testified before the commission in the last few days said the incident of ransacking and looting for which the FIR was filed took place between 12:00 to 12:30am on July 24. But Sub-Inspector Sattar of the Ramna Police Station had earlier testified that he received a complaint from a resident of room No. 325, Zannatul Kanan, regarding the incident at about 10:00pm on July 23 and Duty Officer of the police station Tofazzal Hossain accepted it as an FIR at about 10:45pm.

However, the general students alleged that the non-student JCD leaders led by Halima Khan Luci and Noorjahan Begum Shanta, president and general secretary of the JCD' Shamsunnahar Hall chapter, themselves ransacked their room to divert the issue.

Meanwhile, Justice M Tafazzal Islam visited the Ramna Police Station Monday evening to see the condition of the custody where the arrested 18 students were kept for several hours. He also visited the Shamsunnahar Hall for the second time yesterday afternoon.

A total of 39 people have testified till yesterday.

Cynicism greets Israeli plans

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unimpressed.

"It's important to hear from Sharon himself. In the past, we had several initiatives and they didn't work out," said Palestinian parliament member Ziad Abu Amr.

"I'm afraid this is another public relations initiative," he added.

Abu Amr said the impression Ben Eliezer was trying to create was that the Israeli government was trying to find a way out and the Palestinians were doing nothing.

He added the situation on the ground precluded any strong action by Palestinian security forces, while Israel continued to occupy Palestinian towns in the West Bank.

"I don't think Palestinian security will be in a position to crack down on militants while Israel is doing the same thing in the West Bank," Abu

Amr said.

"This would push the security forces into the position of being collaborators and quislings."

As long as Israel failed to offer any viable roadmap to peace, he warned: "Public opinion would turn against Palestinian security if they tried to round up Hamas and Islamic Jihad activists."

For its part, Hamas said Tuesday it rejected Ben Eliezer's plan, saying it aimed to sap Palestinian resistance to the occupation.

Meanwhile, the Palestinian leadership was meeting in Ramallah Tuesday to discuss a plan presented the night before by Israel's Defence Minister Binyamin Ben Eliezer, Palestinian officials here said.

Palestinian interior minister Abdel Razaq Yahya met with Ben Eliezer

late Monday to hear the Israel's "Gaza First" plan, whereby Israeli forces would slowly withdraw from areas re-occupied in the 22-month Intifada if the Palestinians crack down on militant groups.

Palestinian officials said the plan could also apply to Bethlehem in the southern West Bank if the situation there remained calm.

Yahya likewise asked for an Israeli withdrawal from Ramallah, where Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat's headquarters are based, but officials said the Israeli side refused.

The officials said the two ministers could meet again Tuesday night.

However, the Israeli defence ministry said no meeting was planned.

Hindu pilgrims killed

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bolster the legitimacy of its rule there.

"It was anticipated. You can shout about it, hunt down the terrorists responsible for this, but beyond that you can't do anything," said political analyst Inder Malhotra.

"(Pakistan Prime Minister Pervez) Musharraf is under intense pressure from the jihadis (holy warriors) that if you let this election go through, the Indians will have won the game."

New Delhi says it will not end its huge military deployment on the border with Pakistan until it is convinced its neighbor has made good on a pledge to halt the flow of guerrillas into Jammu and Kashmir.

He has said the Kashmir vote will be a "litmus test" of Pakistan's promise.

Pakistan, which says rebel incursions have stopped, seeks implementation of 1948-49 U.N. resolutions for a plebiscite to determine whether Kashmiris wish to join India or Pakistan and says the

elections are no substitute.

Indian authorities have deployed a 12,000-strong security force along the 240-mile pilgrimage route for fear of attacks by Muslim rebels. The security is the tightest ever for the pilgrimage since the separatist revolt began in mainly Hindu but officially secular India's only Muslim-majority state.

AFP adds: Indian Prime Minister Atal Behari Vajpayee met Tuesday with top aides as his government blamed Pakistan for a dawn attack in Kashmir which killed eight Hindu pilgrims.

Junior Home Minister I.D. Swami told reporters outside parliament that Islamabad was aiming to disrupt state elections in Kashmir due to begin next month.

Asked if he believed Pakistan was behind the attack, Swami answered: "No one has to think twice or doubt about that."

"Even when separatist leaders are thinking of taking part in the election, they are trying to sabotage

DUPDAA programmes shifted

The re-union, bi-annual general meeting, election and reception to celebrities of Dhaka University Political Science Department Alumni Association will be held at TSC, Dhaka University on September 27 instead of National Press Club on August 9 due to unavoidable reasons, says a press release.

Tagore's death

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English by Tagore himself when he was on his visit to Shilaidaha in Kushtia.

Bangladesh takes special pride in being historically linked to the making of the greatest of works of Tagore that earned him the Nobel prize.

Tagore died in Calcutta in 1941. He was knighted in 1915 by King George V, which Tagore revoked in 1919 in protest against the Amritsar massacre in which the British troops killed 400 civilians.

Tagore served as a bridge between the east and the west. A great champion of humanity, Tagore had embraced life in his stories, essays, songs, dramas, and fictions. He has trodden almost all realms of art and culture, thereby becoming an icon for the Bengali nation, breathing all its passion and aspiration.

Newspapers published special articles on Tagore's death anniversary and electronic media aired special programmes to mark the day.

Six killed

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Ainuddin, 30. The bodies were kept at the hospital after autopsy.

Police seized the minibus before its driver fled.

A case was registered with the Gazipur police station in this connection.

Govt withdraws

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The two other accused - Taslima Khatoon and Zakia Akhter - will face the trial. Taslima Khatoon is president of Bonochhaya Mahila Kalyan Samity and Zakia Akhter is project coordinator of Bonophul-the two NGOs. The accused women, also belonging to the ruling BNP, could not submit to the government any estimate of how they spent the money.

Final one-day

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It will be the 53rd ODI for the international newcomers whose track record shows only three wins including a memorable victory against Pakistan in the 1999 World Cup. After a dismal Test series Bangladesh put up a decent show in the first one-day international, scoring their best 226-8 against Sri Lanka. But the 1996 World champions coasted to victory losing five wickets.

The second match turned out to be a no-contest as the home side overhauled the paltry target in only 15.4 overs.

Bangladesh: Hannan Sarker, Mohammad Ashraful, Habibul Bashar, Khaled Mashud (captain), Tushar Imran, Al-Shahriar, Alok Kapali, Khaled Mahmud, Mohammad Rafique, Taposh Baishya and Monjurul Islam.

Polluters

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it," he said.

The six-point demand includes conversion of all two-stroke three-wheelers into CNG despite the fact that such conversion has no effect on the emission of blue smoke through the burning of lubricant.

According to sources, some 17,000 two-stroke three-wheelers would not be able to ply the city roads when the ban comes into effect from September 1.

The autorickshaw owners and employees also demanded relaxation of rules in issuing driving license to three-wheeler drivers and route permits to all three-wheelers registered after 1993.

Meanwhile, the government has also announced to deploy police and BDR at all autorickshaw stands in the city from September 1. Sources in the communication ministry said the government would take stringent actions against anyone attempting to foil the government move. Steps have also been taken to introduce double-decker buses and CNG-powered four-stroke autorickshaws.

BAT's afforestation

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tion and for creating a greener Bangladesh by planting trees every nook and corner.

Meanwhile, Zahurul Haque Sarker, divisional lead manager of BAT in Chittagong, told this correspondent that the BAT had a target of planting about 40 lakh saplings across the country, which is now nearing completion.

A subsidiary of UK-based British American Tobacco P.L.C. the BAT is the leading tobacco company in Bangladesh.

Dhaka firm to ensure int'l labour standard

BSS, Dhaka

State Minister for Labour and Employment Lutfur Rahman Khan yesterday called upon the International Labour Organisation (ILO) to play an effective role in minimising irrational conditions imposed by foreign buyers on export of readymade garments and other products from the country.

He made the call at a meeting with ILO Area Director Gopal Bhattacharya at the Secretariat.

Labour and Employment Secretary M Helal Uddin Khan was also present at the meeting.

Despite a poor country, the state minister said, Bangladesh is determined to ensure international labour standard in phases. He said the export-oriented industries of the country will have to face an uneven competition from 2005.

As a result, flourishing of industries in the country will be hindered and severe unemployment and social problem will be created due to irrational conditions being imposed by the foreign buyers, he said.

The meeting discussed the programme of ILO and the government to formulate a 'concerted plan of action' for elimination of child labour from the country. The preparatory work of the programme will start this year, an official press release said.

It also discussed the progress of three projects being implemented by the Ministry of Labour and Employment at a cost of Tk 65 crore with the financial assistance from ILO and other donors.

The state minister also urged the ILO to take projects for the welfare of tea plantation, garments and retrenched workers.

Mugger gets 5-yr term

BSS, Chittagong

The Public Safety Act (PSA) Tribunal judge here yesterday sentenced one person to five years' rigorous imprisonment (RI) for snatching valuables from a home-bound expatriate Bangladeshi last year, court sources said.

Judge ANM Bashirullah also fined the convict, Syed Ali Newaz Soheli, Tk 10,000. He will have to suffer another three months' imprisonment if he fails to pay.

Soheli is the son of Syed Jahangir Alam of Mirzapur under Hathazari Thana in the district.

The prosecution story, in brief, is that the convict along with other accomplices snatched cash and other valuables from Emran Sharif at gunpoint on April 4, 2001. Sharif, who returned from Abu Dhabi was

on way to his village home.

The gang stopped the autorickshaw in which the expatriate was travelling at Enayetpur Balurail on Chittagong-Rangamati road in Hathazari Upazila by putting up barricade. They beat him up before taking away all his belongings.

Later, Sharif with the help of local union parishad chairman and other people identified and caught the gang leader Soheli and handed over him to the police.

The judge examined 13 witnesses in the case and found Soheli guilty.

Special Public Prosecutor Ahmed Qamrul Islam Chowdhury Sazzad appeared on behalf of the state while Advocate Mohaddad Shamsul Alam and Mohammad Anwar appeared for the defendant.

AL asks people to protest price hike of essentials

UNB, Dhaka

The main opposition Awami League (AL) yesterday urged people to join a united protest against a steep rise of prices of essentials, which it fears may lead to a famine in the country.

In protest against price hike of essentials, the AL announced countrywide demonstrations for August 10. Rallies and processions will be staged as parts of the protest programme.

"Public life has become a misery. The government has no control over the market neither has it taken any steps to address it," said a party resolution adopted at an emergency meeting of its executive committee.

Chaired by acting party president the party Abdus Samad Azad, the meeting, held at the Dhamondhi office, noted that following the

passage of a pro-rich budget and adoption of wrong policy by the BNP-Jamaat coalition government, prices of essentials skyrocketed beyond the purchase capacity of common people.

"People of all classes are frustrated and agitated due to retrenchment of labourers from industries, increase in unemployment and non-increase in salary of service holders and professionals," the resolution added.

Turing to the recent incident at the Shamsunnahar Hall of Dhaka University, the meeting hailed the steps of students and teachers and demanded immediate withdrawal of "false" cases filed against students.

It also demanded exemplary punishment to the persons responsible for the "barbaric" acts.

Monorail deal

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Singaporean company in this regard."